

The Condition of Education 2010

Indicator 17

Annual Earnings of Young Adults

The indicator and corresponding tables are taken directly from *The Condition of Education 2010*. Therefore, the page numbers may not be sequential.

Additional information about the survey data and supplementary notes can be found in the full report. For a copy of *The Condition of Education 2010*, visit the NCES website (<http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2010028>) or contact ED Pubs at 1-877-4ED-PUBS.

Suggested Citation:

Aud, S., Hussar, W., Planty, M., Snyder, T., Bianco, K., Fox, M., Frohlich, L., Kemp, J., Drake, L. (2010). *The Condition of Education 2010* (NCES 2010-028). National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC.

Annual Earnings of Young Adults

In 2008, young adults with a bachelor's degree earned 28 percent more than young adults with an associate's degree, 53 percent more than young adult high school completers, and 96 percent more than young adults who did not earn a high school diploma.

In 2008, some 65 percent of young adults ages 25–34 in the labor force were employed full time throughout a full year. The percentage of young adults working full-time, full-year was generally higher for those with higher levels of educational attainment. For example, 72 percent of young adults with a bachelor's degree or higher were full-time, full-year workers in 2008, compared with 62 percent of young adults with a high school diploma or its equivalent. Among young adults employed full-time, full-year, higher educational attainment was associated with higher median earnings. This pattern of higher earnings corresponding with higher levels of educational attainment was consistent for each year shown between 1995 and 2008 (see table A-17-1). For example, young adults with a bachelor's degree consistently had higher median earnings than those with less education. This pattern held for male, female, White, Black, Hispanic, and Asian subgroups.

In 2008, the median of the earnings of young adults with a bachelor's degree was \$46,000, while the median was \$36,000 for those with an associate's degree, \$30,000 for those with a high school diploma or its equivalent, and \$23,500 for those who did not earn a high school diploma or its equivalent. In other words, in 2008, young adults with a bachelor's degree earned 28 percent more than young adults with an associate's degree, 53 percent more than young adult high school completers, and 96 percent more than young adults who did not earn a high school diploma. In 2008, the median of the earnings of young adults with a master's degree or higher was \$55,000—20 percent more than young adults with a bachelor's degree.

Comparing the median of those with at least a bachelor's degree and those with each lower level of educational attainment, the earnings difference increased between 1980 and 2008, in constant 2008 dollars. This increase in the earnings differential over this period was primarily due to the decrease in earnings for those with less than a bachelor's degree. However, over the more recent, shorter

period between 2000 and 2008, there was generally no measurable change in the earnings difference between these groups. For example, in 1980, young adults with a bachelor's degree or higher earned \$15,700 more than those who did not earn a high school diploma or its equivalent. In 2000, this difference increased to \$25,000 and was \$26,500 in 2008. In 1980, young adults with a bachelor's degree or higher earned \$10,500 more than high school completers. In 2000, this difference increased to \$18,800, and in 2008 it was \$20,000. Between 2000 and 2008, there was no measurable trend in the earnings difference between those with a bachelor's degree and those with a master's degree or higher. In 2000, young adults with a master's degree or higher earned \$7,500 more than their peers with a bachelor's degree; in 2005 this earnings difference was \$10,100, and in 2008 this earnings difference was \$9,000.

Earnings differences were also observed by sex and race/ethnicity. In 2008, at every education level, the median of the earnings of young adult males was higher than the median for young adult females. For example, in 2008, young adult males with a bachelor's degree earned \$53,000, while their female counterparts earned \$42,000. In the same year, the median of White young adults' earnings was higher than that of Black and Hispanic young adults' earnings at each educational level, except the level of master's degree or higher, where there were no measurable differences. Asian young adults with a bachelor's degree or master's degree or higher had higher earnings than their White and Black counterparts in 2008. The median of those with at least a master's degree in 2008 was \$70,000 for Asian young adults, \$55,000 for White young adults, \$53,000 for Black young adults, and \$52,000 for Hispanic young adults.



For more information: *Table A-17-1*

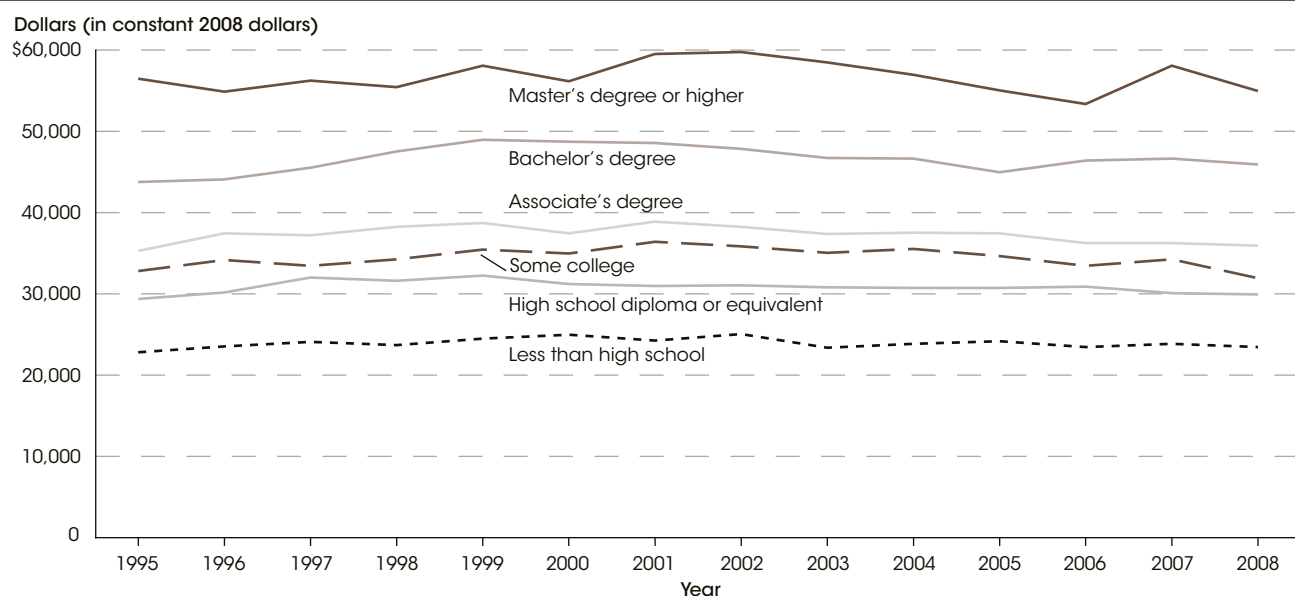
Glossary: *Bachelor's degree, Constant dollars, Consumer Price Index (CPI), Educational attainment, High school completion, High school diploma*

Technical Notes

High school completers includes those who earned a high school diploma or equivalent (e.g., a General Educational Development [GED] certificate). Earnings are presented in 2008 constant dollars by means of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) to eliminate inflationary factors and allow for direct comparison across years. For more information on the CPI, see *supplemental note 10*. *Full-year worker* refers to those who were employed 50 or more weeks

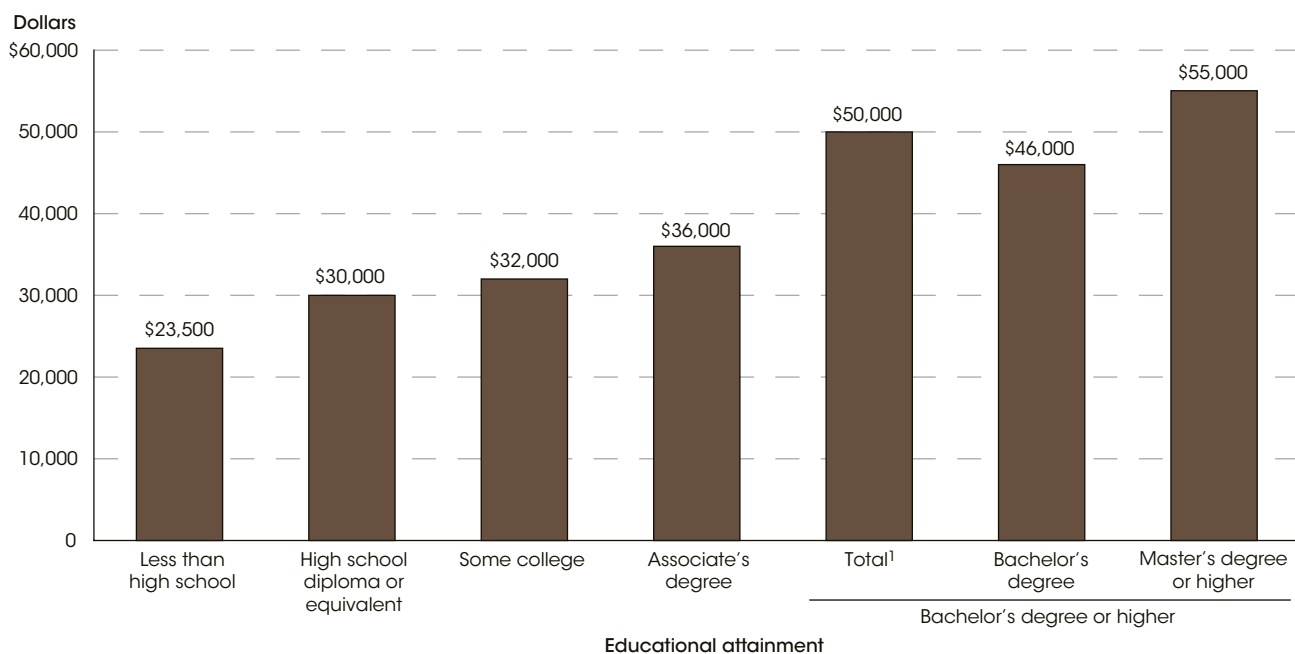
during the previous year; *full-time worker* refers to those who were usually employed 35 or more hours per week. The Current Population Survey (CPS) questions used to obtain educational attainment were changed in 1992. In 1994, the survey instrument for the CPS was changed and weights were adjusted. For more information on changes to the CPS, see *supplemental note 2*. For more information on race/ethnicity, see *supplemental note 1*.

Figure 17-1. Median annual earnings of full-time, full-year wage and salary workers ages 25–34, by educational attainment: 1995–2008



NOTE: Earnings are presented in 2008 constant dollars by means of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) to eliminate inflationary factors and allow for direct comparison across years. For more information on the CPI, see *supplemental note 10*. *Full-year worker* refers to those who were employed 50 or more weeks during the previous year; *full-time worker* refers to those who were usually employed 35 or more hours per week. For more information on the Current Population Survey (CPS), see *supplemental note 2*.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), March and Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 1996–2009.

Figure 17-2. Median annual earnings of full-time, full-year wage and salary workers ages 25–34, by educational attainment: 2008



¹ Total represents the median earnings of those with a bachelor's degree or higher.

NOTE: *Full-year worker* refers to those who were employed 50 or more weeks during the previous year; *full-time worker* refers to those who were usually employed 35 or more hours per week. For more information on the Current Population Survey (CPS), see *supplemental note 2*.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), March and Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 2009.

Supplemental Table to Indicator 17

Annual Earnings of Young Adults

Table A-17-1. Median annual earnings and percentage of full-time, full-year wage and salary workers ages 25–34, by educational attainment, sex, and race/ethnicity: Selected years, 1980–2008

Educational attainment, sex, and race/ethnicity ¹	Median earnings [In constant 2008 dollars]							Percentage of full-time, full-year wage and salary workers in 2008 ²
	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2008	
Total³	\$39,200	\$39,900	\$37,100	\$35,300	\$37,500	\$37,300	\$37,000	64.9
Less than high school	31,400	28,000	25,700	22,900	25,000	24,300	23,500	48.4
High school diploma or equivalent	36,600	34,000	31,700	29,400	31,300	30,800	30,000	61.7
Some college ⁴	39,200	40,000	37,100	32,900	35,000	34,700	32,000	62.9
Associate's degree	—	—	—	35,300	37,500	37,500	36,000	66.3
Bachelor's degree or higher	47,000	50,000	48,300	46,600	50,000	48,500	50,000	71.6
Bachelor's degree	—	—	—	43,800	48,800	45,000	46,000	71.6
Master's degree or higher	—	—	—	56,500	56,300	55,100	55,000	71.5
Sex and educational attainment								
Male	46,700	44,000	41,200	38,900	42,500	38,600	40,000	68.9
Less than high school	34,700	30,000	28,300	26,800	25,500	27,200	25,000	54.8
High school diploma or equivalent	44,200	40,000	36,300	33,900	36,300	33,100	32,000	64.8
Some college ⁴	47,000	46,000	41,200	36,700	41,100	38,600	37,000	68.2
Associate's degree	—	—	—	36,700	46,300	43,000	41,000	73.2
Bachelor's degree or higher	52,300	54,800	52,300	52,700	57,500	55,100	55,000	76.6
Bachelor's degree	—	—	—	49,500	56,300	49,600	53,000	76.3
Master's degree or higher	—	—	—	62,600	66,300	60,600	65,000	77.2
Female	31,400	32,000	32,600	31,100	33,800	33,100	34,000	60.3
Less than high school	21,800	22,000	20,600	18,700	20,800	19,800	17,000	35.9
High school diploma or equivalent	28,700	28,000	26,400	24,900	26,300	26,500	25,000	56.6
Some college ⁴	31,400	32,000	33,000	28,300	30,000	30,900	29,000	56.6
Associate's degree	—	—	—	33,900	32,500	33,100	32,500	60.1
Bachelor's degree or higher	38,800	41,800	42,800	42,400	44,400	44,100	45,000	67.2
Bachelor's degree	—	—	—	39,600	43,800	41,900	42,000	67.3
Master's degree or higher	—	—	—	49,500	50,000	51,800	51,000	67.1
Race/ethnicity¹ and educational attainment								
White	40,800	40,000	39,500	36,700	40,500	38,600	40,000	65.8
Less than high school	32,900	30,000	28,000	25,400	25,000	25,400	26,400	43.6
High school diploma or equivalent	37,500	36,000	33,000	31,100	34,400	33,100	31,200	61.9
Some college ⁴	41,400	40,000	39,200	33,900	37,500	35,300	33,100	63.2
Associate's degree	‡	‡	‡	36,700	40,000	38,600	40,000	66.3
Bachelor's degree or higher	47,000	50,000	49,400	48,000	50,000	49,600	50,000	71.5
Bachelor's degree	‡	‡	‡	45,200	50,000	45,200	47,000	71.5
Master's degree or higher	‡	‡	‡	56,500	56,300	55,100	55,000	71.5
Black	31,400	30,000	29,700	29,700	31,700	31,900	30,000	60.6
Less than high school	23,300	20,000	20,900	19,800	23,800	22,900	20,000	37.4
High school diploma or equivalent	31,400	28,000	26,200	25,400	26,300	25,400	26,000	57.8
Some college ⁴	34,000	30,000	32,100	31,100	32,500	32,100	30,000	60.0
Associate's degree	‡	‡	‡	31,100	31,300	30,900	31,000	58.6
Bachelor's degree or higher	39,200	40,000	41,200	38,900	43,800	43,000	45,000	73.5
Bachelor's degree	‡	‡	‡	36,700	41,300	39,700	40,000	72.2
Master's degree or higher	‡	‡	‡	48,000	53,800	48,500	53,000	77.2

See notes at end of table.

Table A-17-1. Median annual earnings and percentage of full-time, full-year wage and salary workers ages 25–34, by educational attainment, sex, and race/ethnicity: Selected years, 1980–2008—Continued

Educational attainment, sex, and race/ethnicity ¹	Median earnings [In constant 2008 dollars]							Percentage of full-time, full-year wage and salary workers in 2008 ²
	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2008	
Race/ethnicity¹ and educational attainment								
Hispanic	\$35,300	\$32,500	\$29,700	\$28,300	\$31,300	\$29,800	\$30,000	64.6
Less than high school	31,200	26,000	23,200	22,000	22,800	22,900	22,000	55.2
High school diploma or equivalent	31,400	30,000	28,000	26,800	28,800	26,500	27,000	64.3
Some college ⁴	39,200	38,000	33,000	28,300	33,800	35,300	30,100	66.8
Associate's degree	‡	‡	‡	33,900	37,500	37,500	32,000	71.0
Bachelor's degree or higher	42,700	48,000	44,500	42,400	47,500	45,200	45,000	71.0
Bachelor's degree	‡	‡	‡	40,700	45,000	44,100	42,000	71.5
Master's degree or higher	‡	‡	‡	‡	‡	55,800	52,000	68.7
Asian	—	—	\$38,700⁵	\$36,700⁵	\$45,000⁵	\$44,100	\$50,000	69.1
Less than high school	—	—	‡ ⁵	‡ ⁵	‡ ⁵	‡	‡	‡
High school diploma or equivalent	—	—	27,200 ⁵	28,300 ⁵	31,300 ⁵	29,800	28,000	63.0
Some college ⁴	—	—	33,000 ⁵	26,300 ⁵	35,000 ⁵	33,100	33,000	63.8
Associate's degree	—	—	‡ ⁵	28,300 ⁵	37,500 ⁵	38,600	31,700	78.4
Bachelor's degree or higher	—	—	49,400 ⁵	46,600 ⁵	62,500 ⁵	55,100	60,000	71.9
Bachelor's degree	—	—	‡ ⁵	43,100 ⁵	61,300 ⁵	55,100	55,000	72.7
Master's degree or higher	—	—	‡ ⁵	53,700 ⁵	66,300 ⁵	60,600	70,000	70.9
Pacific Islander	—	—	(⁵)	(⁵)	(⁵)	‡	‡	58.7
American Indian/Alaska Native	—	—	\$33,000	\$28,300	\$30,000	\$33,100	\$29,000	52.8
Two or more races	—	—	—	—	—	\$38,600	\$34,000	59.5

— Not available.

‡ Reporting standards not met (too few cases).

¹ Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Estimates for educational categories for Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Two or more races subgroups did not meet reporting standards. For more information on race/ethnicity, see *supplemental note 1*.² Full-time, full-year wage workers as a percentage of the population ages 25–34 who reported working or looking for work in 2008.³ Totals for 1980 and 1985 include other racial/ethnic groups not shown.⁴ Due to changes in categories across time, the category “some college” prior to 1992 is not comparable with “some college” from 1992 onward. Prior to 1992, “some college” may have included students who earned an associate's degree.⁵ From 1989 through 2002, data for Asians and Pacific Islanders were not reported separately; therefore, Pacific Islanders are included with Asians during this period.NOTE: Earnings are presented in constant dollars by means of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) to eliminate inflationary factors and allow for direct comparison across years. For more information on the CPI, see *supplemental note 10*. Full-year worker refers to those who were employed 50 or more weeks during the previous year; full-time worker refers to those who were usually employed 35 or more hours per week. For more information on the CPS, see *supplemental note 2*.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), March and Annual Social and Economic Supplement, selected years, 1981–2009.

Standard Error Table to Indicator 17

Annual Earnings of Young Adults

Table S-17-1. Standard errors for the median annual earnings and percentage of full-time, full-year wage and salary workers ages 25–34, by educational attainment, sex, and race/ethnicity: Selected years, 1980–2008

Educational attainment, sex, and race/ethnicity	Median earnings [In constant 2008 dollars]							Percentage of full-time, full-year wage and salary workers in 2008
	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2008	
Total	\$220	\$260	\$270	\$190	\$130	\$340	\$130	0.46
Less than high school	670	1,010	540	430	380	310	500	1.81
High school diploma or equivalent	410	300	340	280	230	350	170	0.88
Some college	430	460	500	610	460	210	180	1.03
Associate's degree	†	†	†	580	340	810	330	1.45
Bachelor's degree or higher	560	550	550	790	290	680	200	0.73
Bachelor's degree	†	†	†	360	680	240	280	0.86
Master's degree or higher	†	†	†	1,030	820	410	570	1.35
Sex and educational attainment								
Male	360	290	270	380	500	190	170	0.60
Less than high school	1,210	840	800	970	390	750	610	2.22
High school diploma or equivalent	400	470	360	560	560	250	380	1.09
Some college	660	790	530	510	760	370	510	1.36
Associate's degree	†	†	†	940	940	1,300	440	1.97
Bachelor's degree or higher	610	790	530	810	560	690	520	1.00
Bachelor's degree	†	†	†	650	930	460	750	1.18
Master's degree or higher	†	†	†	2,000	2,250	2,190	1,730	1.89
Female	210	260	310	250	210	160	370	0.69
Less than high school	910	880	950	860	710	770	500	2.99
High school diploma or equivalent	290	440	320	420	330	430	340	1.45
Some college	360	460	490	410	470	720	630	1.56
Associate's degree	†	†	†	1,260	510	530	860	2.07
Bachelor's degree or higher	580	460	510	590	320	260	300	1.03
Bachelor's degree	†	†	†	850	370	710	280	1.24
Master's degree or higher	†	†	†	1,350	1,070	950	380	1.87
Race/ethnicity and educational attainment								
White	240	240	350	220	290	170	160	0.57
Less than high school	1,160	860	640	1,160	470	880	950	3.10
High school diploma or equivalent	450	460	320	350	420	240	230	1.15
Some college	470	440	700	640	520	270	850	1.30
Associate's degree	†	†	†	710	390	570	720	1.74
Bachelor's degree or higher	590	440	470	840	310	530	230	0.85
Bachelor's degree	†	†	†	440	490	270	440	1.01
Master's degree or higher	†	†	†	980	910	490	650	1.59
Black	490	540	780	510	360	620	330	1.40
Less than high school	1,460	1,360	1,130	1,530	1,280	1,030	1,280	5.13
High school diploma or equivalent	730	750	530	810	400	840	520	2.39
Some college	1,360	940	1,020	1,200	650	1,330	580	2.78
Associate's degree	†	†	†	1,280	840	1,140	1,110	4.52
Bachelor's degree or higher	1,520	1,290	950	1,320	1,530	1,370	1,100	2.63
Bachelor's degree	†	†	†	1,200	1,870	950	470	3.11
Master's degree or higher	†	†	†	1,760	2,960	2,610	2,720	4.88

See notes at end of table.

Table S-17-1. Standard errors for the median annual earnings and percentage of full-time, full-year wage and salary workers ages 25–34, by educational attainment, sex, and race/ethnicity: Selected years, 1980–2008—Continued

Educational attainment, sex, and race/ethnicity	Median earnings [In constant 2008 dollars]							Percentage of full-time, full-year wage and salary workers in 2008
	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2008	
Race/ethnicity and educational attainment								
Hispanic	\$1,400	\$770	\$850	\$550	\$440	\$520	\$240	1.18
Less than high school	2,730	2,160	2,140	980	790	470	520	2.76
High school diploma or equivalent	1,420	1,070	1,160	1,100	1,050	770	770	1.93
Some college	2,780	2,810	1,330	1,260	1,060	840	460	2.75
Associate's degree	†	†	†	2,020	1,060	1,720	1,770	3.97
Bachelor's degree or higher	3,830	3,070	2,310	1,640	2,190	1,010	1,400	2.75
Bachelor's degree	†	†	†	1,890	2,000	980	1,270	3.07
Master's degree or higher	†	†	†	†	†	3,670	2,700	6.17
Asian	†	†	1,640	1,300	620	680	700	2.01
Less than high school	†	†	†	†	†	†	†	†
High school diploma or equivalent	†	†	2,300	2,050	1,520	1,440	2,140	5.85
Some college	†	†	1,890	2,460	2,690	1,440	3,400	5.87
Associate's degree	†	†	†	1,730	2,360	4,670	2,250	7.19
Bachelor's degree or higher	†	†	2,410	2,000	920	720	890	2.42
Bachelor's degree	†	†	†	900	1,920	2,230	1,120	3.17
Master's degree or higher	†	†	†	5,130	2,730	4,150	2,980	3.72
Pacific Islander	†	†	†	†	†	†	†	7.85
American Indian/Alaska Native	†	†	4,300	2,680	1,430	1,160	2,180	6.40
Two or more races	†	†	†	†	†	1,670	1,910	4.31

† Not applicable.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), March and Annual Social and Economic Supplement, selected years, 1981–2009.